

providing the ID number to the central location; and
checking the validity of the ID number at the
central location.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining
the identity of the user further comprises the steps of:

determining if the local computer comprises a
datafile storing an ID number indicating the identity of
the user and providing the ID number to the central
location;

if there is no datafile storing an ID number at the
local computer, asking the user to provide a pre-assigned
ID number;

if the user does not have a pre-assigned ID number,
collecting information from the user and thereafter
allocating an ID number to the user; and

if an ID number is provided to the central location,
checking the validity of the ID number at the central
location.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer network is
the Internet and the central location is a webserver
coupled to a database, the step of redirecting further
comprising the steps:

providing the local computer with an address of a
website comprising the content associated with the image;

causing a browser program at the local computer to
navigate to the website.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the step of allocating

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optionally causing a message to be displayed to the user at the local computer informing the user of the reward allocated to the user.

providing to the user, via the Internet, a list of rewards that have been allocated to the user.

providing the local computer with an address of a promoter website comprising the content associated with the reward;

enabling the user to redeem the reward at the promoter website.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

allowing the user to visit a promoter website and engage in a transaction;

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passing control to the webserver;
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allowing the user to select a reward from the list of applicable rewards;

causing a browser program at the local computer to navigate to the promoter website; and

redeeming the reward at the promoter website.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the imaged displayed on the computer screen comprises text.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying an image on a computer screen of a local computer comprises displaying an image on a computer screen of a local computer, the image not comprising a reward indicator.

14. The method of claim 3 wherein the step of asking the user to input an ID number comprises the step of

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the physical memory device is one of a magnetic stripe card or smartcard.

allowing the user to print the reward at the local computer;

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17. A computer-implemented method for interactively and electronically distributing and redeeming rewards via a computer network, the computer network coupled to a user computer and a central computer, the central computer coupled to a database, the computer network also coupled to a plurality of promoter computers, the method comprising the steps of:

at the user computer, displaying an image comprising a reward indicator;

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enabling a user to select the image;
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at a central computer, determining the identity of the user;

at the central computer, allocating to the user a reward associated with the reward indicator by storing a reward identifier in the database associated with the user; and

causing the user computer to connect with one of the

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18. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

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if a user at a user computer selects an advertisement with a reward indicator:

if a user at a user computer indicates that the user desires to redeem a reward allocated to the user:

of claim 17 further comprising:
redeeming a reward associated with the selected advertisement;
allocating a reward to a user computer based on the redeemed reward;
obtaining information from a central computer for allocating rewards;
a central computer for allocating rewards;
monitoring rewards allocated to a user computer coupled to a computer;
promoter computer;
at a user computer;
with a reward information;
obtaining information from a central database, the central database;
selected advertisement;
transferring content associated with the selected advertisement;
at a user computer;
a reward allocated to a user computer;
obtaining information from a central database, the central database;

(d) instructing the promoter honor the reward.

wherein, when the user selects an image with an associated reward indicator, control is passed to the central computer which identifies the user and allocates a reward to the user associated with the selected image.

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32. An interactive computer-controlled reward system to allow a user to rewards previously collected by the user, each reward associated with a promoter, the system comprising:

a computer network;

a central computer coupled to the computer network, the central computer comprising a database, the database storing a list of registered users and a list of rewards that have been previously collected by each user and that are available for redemption;

a user computer coupled to the computer network, the user computer enabling the user to select a reward for redemption from the list of rewards; and

a promoter computer coupled to the computer network, the promoter computer operated by a promoter;

wherein, when the user wishes to redeem a reward, control is passed to the central computer which identifies the user and allows the user to select a reward from the list of rewards, and thereafter control is passed to the promoter computer for the user to redeem the selected reward.

33. The system of claim 32 wherein the user computer comprises a printing device to allow the user to print a reward for physical redemption.

34. The system of claim 32 wherein the image is an advertisement.

35. The system of claim 32 wherein the computer network

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36. The system of claim 32 wherein the user computer includes a cookie that stores a user ID. ✓

37. The system of claim 32 wherein the user can access the central computer to transfer a reward on the list of rewards to another registered user.

a central database for storing rewards allocated to users;

a central computer coupled to the central database and to a computer network of user computers and promoter computers;

means, located at the central computer, for obtaining information to identify a user;

means, located at the central computer, for allocating a reward to the user in the central database if the user at a user computer selects an advertisement with an optional reward indicator, the reward associated with the selected advertisement and a promoter;

means, located at the central computer, for transferring control to a promoter computer associated with the selected advertisement; and

means, located at the central computer, for providing to the user a list of rewards allocated to the user;

means, located at the central computer, for enabling the user to select one of the rewards in the list of rewards; and

means to instruct the promoter computer of the promoter associated with the selected reward that a valid reward has been selected for redemption by the user.

39. The system of claim 38 further comprising means to allow a user to transfer a reward in the list of rewards to another registered user.